

DENALI BOROUGH

P.O. Box 480 • Healy, Alaska 99743

Phone: (907) 683-1330 • Fax: (907) 683-1340

Email: dbgovt@mtaonline.net

Website: www.denaliborough.org



Clay Walker, Mayor

September 2021 Mayor's Report to the Denali Borough Assembly

This report speaks primarily to non-agenda items. Agenda items will be discussed in meeting.

2020 U.S. Census

- The first round of numbers from the 2020 U.S. Census are in and they are disappointing for the Denali Borough. **Our population has changed from 1,826 in 2010 to 1,619 in 2020 – a decline of over ten percent.** The interior of Alaska overall lost population. While I don't have confidence in the accuracy of the count, there are few courses of action to seek a remedy, especially given the limited data the borough collects.
- This decline in population will result in a **decline in revenues** – namely the annual federal PILT payment.

Redistricting based upon changing population

- The **State of Alaska Redistricting Board** has commenced the work of adjusting Alaska's **legislative districts** to fit the new population distributions. On their website <https://www.akredistrict.org/>, you'll find information about their work, an interactive map to construct legislative districts, and a way to make recommendations or public comment to the board. It is likely that our current House District 6 will look very different when the board completes their work and forwards a new legislative district map in November 2021.
- When the US Census releases more detailed census block data, the **Denali Borough** will need to begin the work of ensuring that our current election districts meet apportionment standards. It is possible that the borough will need to **adjust our districts to be fairly apportioned.**

Memorandums of Agreements (MOAs) with the Dept. of Health and Social Services (DHSS)

- The borough has two active MOAs with DHSS by which the borough is helping to support the COVID-19 health care response boroughwide, primarily through the **availability of free COVID testing and vaccination services.** The borough has **requested amendments to the MOAs extending the duration and increasing the dollar amount.**

Horizon Medical Partnership

- The borough has been pleased with the COVID testing and vaccination service provision of our partner, Horizon Medical, who has operated out of the Canyon Clinic through the summer. With the closing of that seasonal facility in September, the borough and Horizon are **working toward the continuation of service delivery** and will provide updates when the location and time changes are finalized. See the Horizon website for current offerings: www.horizonmedicalak.com.

FEMA reimbursement

- The FEMA Public Assistance reimbursement of prior borough expenses of \$87,421 relating to COVID testing and transportation is now finalized. The borough's CARES account will be supplemented by this amount.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) reporting

- In a timely manner, the borough submitted the first report on ARPA funding, reporting that we have not spent any of the \$207,000 received to date. We plan to use these funds to back-fill lost tax revenue and help meet our financial obligation to education in the borough.

Mayor's Trip into Park

- I thank the National Park Service and the Murie Science and Learning Center for their contributions (vehicle plus access) to a successful meeting of the regional mayors and tour into Denali National Park. The City of Anderson Mayor Samantha Thompson and City of Fairbanks Mayor Jim Matherly were unable to attend, but we had Fairbanks North Star Borough Bryce Ward, City of Nenana Mayor Josh Verhagen and City of North Pole Mayor Mike Welsh on this full day tour. We were able to **see first-hand the extent of the issue at "Pretty Rocks Slide" on Polychrome** as well as spend the day discussing local and state issues.

New Hire Update

- We were very pleased by the number of well-qualified applicants we received in posting the part-time Administrative Aide position vacated by Trena Haugen. After four candidate interviews and much consideration, **Teresa Floberg was selected for the position**. Teresa brings a strong educational (BS in Business Admin) and professional (Current GM of lodge and prior non-profit and grant writing) experience to the position, which was redefined as **Community Development Administrative Aide**. Welcome Teresa to the team when you get a chance! She starts September 21.

UAS Update

- As I continue my slow steady pursuit of a Master's of Public Administration, I am now more than halfway finished the coursework. After completing my summer class, Public Employment Law, my fall course is Public Sector Leadership. This semester those classes are on Thursday evening, so I will be missing a few upcoming School Board meetings.

COVID Update

- **Local case counts are at their highest over the course of pandemic right now**. Our nearest hospital (FMH) has its most COVID patients to date and the state's hospital system is stressed by the burden of increasing COVID cases, the great majority of which are in persons who have yet to receive the vaccine.
- Please do your part to **help protect our health care system capacity** by doing everything you can to not need hospital care. That means being extra careful in fall activities and protecting yourself from COVID through vaccination. While there are numerous break-through cases, these cases are far less likely to result in hospitalization than in those who are unvaccinated.
- When you get a chance, **thank a health care worker**. We have a dedicated group of providers here in the borough who have been working very hard to meet the increasing need. They deserve our gratitude.

Happy September, happy fall. As always, feel free to contact me or staff with questions.

-Clay